



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Drying Out Before Rebuilding

- Wood submerged in water will absorb a large amount of water. Rebuilding too quickly after a flood can cause continuing problems such as mold growth, insect infestations, and deterioration of the wood and wall coverings.
- It may take weeks for the wood to adequately dry before a wall can be closed. The drying time will vary depending on the initial moisture content and the drying conditions.
- Wood should have a moisture content of less than 15 percent before drywall, paneling, or other coverings are placed on the wood. Do-it-yourselfers may be able to borrow or rent a moisture meter from a hardware store or lumberyard. If a contractor is doing the work, homeowners should have the contractor verify with a meter that the wood is dry.
- Ventilation is usually the best way to dry things out and can remove several gallons of water per day. Provide an entrance and exhaust opening for air to promote cross-ventilation. Place a fan in a window or door with the fan to the outdoors. Seal the rest of the opening with cardboard, plywood, or blankets so the fan can create a vacuum. Use fans to circulate air over wet surfaces. Face fans into corners or other hidden areas.
- Small space heaters will have little effect. As wood gets drier it may be helpful to heat the house for a few hours and then ventilate to exchange moist air with dry air.
- A dehumidifier can be used if outside air is humid. Dehumidifiers function most efficiently at warm temperatures. At 80 degrees and 60 percent relative humidity, most dehumidifiers will remove 1 to 2 pints of water per hour from the air.

Adapted from resource material developed by the North Dakota Extension Service entitled "Coping with Floods: After the Flood Information"